

News Release

HAWAII DISTRICT OFFICE

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SBA Names Hawaii's Best Small Businesses for 2008 **Maui Restaurateur Takes Top Honors**

Honolulu – The U. S. Small Business Administration is pleased to announce the Hawaii winners of the prestigious 2008 SBA Small Business Awards. Each year, SBA honors outstanding small business owners, entrepreneurs and advocates who best illustrate the important contributions of small business to the local economy and to our quality of life. Over thirty outstanding business owners, advocates, and business leaders will be honored at the Annual Statewide SBA Small Business Awards Luncheon on April 30, 2008, at the Hilton Hawaiian Village.

The 2008 Small Business Person of the Year for the State of Hawaii is Beverly Gannon, the award winning chef and owner of Hali'imaile General Store and Joe's Bar on Maui. Gannon joined the ranks of Hawaii's entrepreneurs over 20 years ago with a catering business she started in her garage. While almost 60% of restaurants fail in the first few years, her creative style, determination, and commitment to excellence have allowed her company to thrive. Today, Gannon directs a remarkably entrepreneurial culinary organization that provides jobs for 128 people and generates millions in annual revenues. She is now competing for the National title and will celebrate National Small Business Week in Washington, D.C. with the winners from the other 49 states, Guam and Puerto Rico.

Top small business owners were also selected to represent each county in the State.

- **Rozett's Nursery in Hilo** was named **Small Business Person of the Year for Hawaii County.** John and Donna Rozett own this growing company.
- On **Oahu**, the fast growing firm, **WCIT Architecture, Inc.** and Principals Robert Iopa, Mark Higa, Lawrence Cunha, Jr. and Daniel Kanekuni took the title in recognition of their innovative international projects.
- **Marynel Valenzuela**, owner of **Ink Spot Printing Corporation in Lihue**, was chosen as the Small Business Person for Kauai in 2008.

The top performing small businesses and advocates who secured the State titles were also awarded four regional titles in competition with others from California, Arizona, Nevada. The Region IX winners also enter into the national competition in their respective categories.

- **Johnson W. K. Choi** garnered the Regional title as the Minority Small Business Champion for 2008 for his work with minority small business owners and export initiatives.
- **Bill Spencer**, president of the **Hawaii Venture Capital Association**, was selected as the **Financial Services Champion** for Hawaii and Region IX for his efforts to increase access to capital for emerging businesses and support of legislation to help businesses grow and thrive in Hawaii.
- **Pamela Tumpap**, president of the **Maui Chamber of Commerce**, added the Regional award to her State of Hawaii honors as the top **Small Business Journalist** for her active support of small business issues and work in several different media to increase awareness about the needs and contributions of small businesses.
- **David Fell and Sandy Kasmann**, owners of **Hawaiian Sunshine Nursery in Hilo**, were named the **State of Hawaii Small Business Exporter for 2008**. They were also honored with the Region IX award.

Along with these noteworthy small businesses, other business owners and champions in nine different categories were also honored for their accomplishments and business acumen:

The **Entrepreneurial Success Award** is given to a company that started as a small business and, with assistance from SBA, has since grown into a successful large business:

- State of Hawaii - Rex Matsuno, Suisan Company Limited in Hilo, HI
- County Of Maui – Richard S. Ouye, Service Rentals and Supplies, Inc., in Kahului

The **Family Owned Small Business Award** recognizes a small business with at least a 15 year history that has been owned and operated by the family, creating jobs, increasing revenues and providing opportunities for other family members.

- State of Hawaii – Jonathan Ota, Tip Top Café and Bakery in Lihue on Kauai.
- County of Maui - Neal Hasegawa, Hasegawa General Store in Hana, Maui
- County of Hawaii – Michael Tokunaga, S. Tokunaga Store in Hilo, HI
- City and County of Honolulu – Roy & Kathy Sakuma, Roy Sakuma Productions & Ukulele Festivals Hawaii

The **Small Business Exporter Award** is presented to a small business that derives a significant portion of their sales from export outside the U.S. and is supportive of other efforts to export U.S. made products and services. In addition to Hawaiian Sunshine Nursery, other honorees include:

- County of Kauai – Lori Cardenas, Aunty Lilikoi, LLC, in Waimea on Kauai
- City and County of Honolulu – Allan Hornstein, Lenox Metals in Kapolei

The **Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award** identifies an individual who has successfully owned and operated a small business, increasing revenue, jobs, and demonstrating potential for long term success for at least three years before reaching the age of 30 at the time of the award.

- State of Hawaii – Thomas Park, Leather Soul, in the Royal Hawaiian Center
- City and County of Honolulu – Kimberly Nakasato, Nakasato Contracting, LLC.
- County of Maui - Brennan Purtzer, Hawaii Pacific Media LLC, in Kaunakakai on Molokai

The **Financial Services Champion Award** is presented to those individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to increasing access to capital, reducing regulatory burdens and helping small businesses improve their financial conditions through assistance, legislative support and other advocacy.

- County of Kauai - Diana Shaw, Kauai Center Director for the Hawaii Small Business Development Center Network
- City and County of Honolulu – Diana Jackson, SCORE of Hawaii
- County of Maui - Richard Kehoe, RJK, LLC and SCORE volunteer

Small Business Journalists are selected based on their work to increase public awareness about the challenges and issues that small businesses face and the contributions they make to our economy. Other journalists honored in 2008 include:

- City and County of Honolulu – Erika Engle, Star Bulletin
- County of Maui – Sky Barnhart Schual, Skywriting Journalism, Copywriting and Editing
- County of Kauai – Joan Conrow, Kauai People News

The **Women in Business Champion** award goes to those individuals who, as advocates, have fulfilled a commitment to the advancement of women's business ownership and who assist and support women in their quest to own, manage and direct their own company. The honorees are:

- State of Hawaii - Joann Seery, BNI Hawaii, Referral Institute and Serious Business Solutions
- County of Hawaii – Roberta Chu, Bank of Hawaii in Hilo
- County of Maui – Carole Kooy, Kilakila Employment Services
- City and County of Honolulu – Susan Utsugi, Central Pacific Bank

The **Minority Small Business Champion** title is awarded to those individuals who have selflessly provide assistance and support to minorities entrepreneurs and business owners. Joining State winner Johnson Choi in these honors:

- County of Kauai – Ernesto Pasion, Tax Accounting & County of Kauai

The 2008 SBA Small Business Award winners will be honored with special events on all islands and capped by the Annual Statewide Luncheon at the Hilton Hawaiian Village on April 30, 2008, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Hosted by the Hawaii Women's Business Center (HWBC), the luncheon will also feature the "Winner's Circle," a special business expo for award winners to showcase their products and services. Sponsoring the event with HWBC are HMAA, Bishop & Company, First Hawaiian Bank, Bank of Hawaii, Hawaii National Bank, ClearChannel Communications, and Pacific Business News. Tickets to this inspiring awards event are available for \$45 each through the Hawaii Women's Business Center. Reservations can be made by calling (808) 526-1001 or by clicking on their website, www.hwbc.org.

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Digital Photos available for SBA Award winners by contacting Jane Sawyer.



Some of Hawaii's 2008 winners
(left to right) Tom Park, Sandy Kasmann, Beverly Gannon, Pam Tumpap, Johnathan Ota, Rex Matsuno, Johnson Choi, Bill Spencer